

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and measures for its prevention on employment and working conditions of women and men in Serbia

June 2020

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report was written during the period of exiting the state of emergency after the COVID-19 virus pandemic, which hit Serbia in the spring months of 2020 and was accompanied by restrictive Government measures, starting with the declaration of the state of emergency. Although it seems that life is slowly returning to normal, the fear from a possible new wave is present, along with concerns about the extent and depth of the consequences for the economy and various areas of social life.

At the peak of the pandemic, in April 2020, when the research presented in this report was conducted, the pandemic and the Government measures had a strong effect on the economy, work of institutions, availability of public and social services, but also on the everyday life of the population. Despite often hearing that everyone is equal before the risks of the disease, this was by no means the case. Not everyone was equally exposed to the risks of infection (the elderly population and people with chronic diseases were at higher risk of more severe forms of illness and fatal outcomes), nor was everyone equally exposed to socio-economic risks, with job loss being among the most severe because it entails a series of other consequences for the economic and social position of individuals and households. The pandemic outlined more clearly which social inequalities are present in our society, how strongly they are rooted in structural and cultural factors, and how they are often reproduced by inadequate institutional solutions.

Gender inequalities are actually one of the fundamental social inequalities that clearly manifested during the pandemic. The burden, measured by the degree of exposure to the risks of COVID-19 infection due to work, as well as the degree of engagement in everyday household and family care strategies (as it could be assumed given the numerous studies on gender inequalities in Serbia,¹ or based on the Gender Equality Index²), was disproportionately borne by women.

To examine the impact of the pandemic and the Government measures on gender inequalities in Serbia and the specific position of women, SeConS – Development Initiative Group in partnership with UN Women conducted four separate analyses within the Gender Equality Facility Project funded by the European Commission (EC) in the period April-June 2020:

- 1) analysis of employment and working conditions of women and men who were employed in the month before the pandemic was declared, based on the data from a survey of the impact of the pandemic on employment in Serbia,
- 2) analysis in the field of the formal and informal care economy,
- 3) analysis of women's entrepreneurship, which includes two components – qualitative and quantitative research with women entrepreneurs;
- 4) labour activity status and position of rural women, with the focus on their involvement in agricultural production, which also includes both quantitative and qualitative research.

This report presents the findings of the first research, while the findings of other surveys can be found in separate reports.

¹ For example, Blagojević, Marina (2013) *Gender Barometer in Serbia*, UN Women; Babović, Marija (2010) *Gender Economic Inequalities in a Comparative Perspective: Serbia and EU*, SeConS, ISIFF, Belgrade.

² SIPRU (2018) *Gender Equality Index in the Republic of Serbia. Measuring gender equality in the Republic of Serbia 2016*, Belgrade.

OBJECTIVES

The effects of the pandemic on the employment of women and men in Serbia were examined in a survey of the adult population with the intention of establishing whether the pandemic and the Government measures had different effects on:

- job loss of women and men,
- gender-specific patterns of risk of exposure to infection while performing their jobs,
- working conditions of women and men during the state of emergency.

However, the aim of this research is not only to describe the situation as it was at the peak of the pandemic in April but to use this picture as a factual basis for proposing measures that can eliminate gender inequalities in the short and medium term. Although Serbia has the key laws and policies specifically aimed at governing the area of gender equality and eliminating gender-based discrimination and gender inequalities,³ as indicated by various independent reports by civil society organizations,⁴ as well as the evaluation of the National Gender Equality Strategy,⁵ laws need to be improved and policies need to be more consistently implemented to create a more favourable environment and instigate a more significant change.

RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLE

The research represents a rapid assessment, which means that it had to be conducted in a short period, and given the limitations of movement, physical and social distancing, it could not be conducted with a traditional face-to-face or door-to-door surveys, but with a telephone survey, which significantly limits the scope in terms of the number of topics and issues that could be examined.

The research was conducted in the period from 11 April 2020 to 23 April 2020⁶ on a random sample of 1,600 households which had at least one person employed in February 2020. The surveyed respondents had to meet the definition of employment, used by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia in the Labour Force Survey, which is harmonized with the international methodology of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Eurostat. According to this definition, **employed persons are persons who have,**

³ Law on Gender Equality ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 104/2009); Law on Prohibition of Discrimination ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 22/2009), National Gender Equality Strategy for the period 2016-2020, Strategy for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination.

⁴ SOS Vojvodina Network (2019) *Priorities and Recommendations for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Serbia: Shadow report to the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women regarding the fourth reporting cycle of Serbia*, available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCEDAW%2fCSS%2fSRB%2f33868&Lang=en; FemPlatz, A11 (2018) *Information for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Pre-sessional Working group for the 72nd session on reviewing the Republic of Serbia*, available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/SRB/INT_CEDAW_ICO_SRB_31783_E.pdf

⁵ SeConS (2018) *Final Report of the Evaluation of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Serbia*, Belgrade, available at <https://www.secons.net/files/publications/99-publication.pdf>.

⁶ A break in data collection was made during the Easter holidays, i.e. from 17 to 20 April 2020.

during at least one hour in the reference week, performed paid job (in cash or in kind), and persons who have a job but were absent from it during that week (with a guarantee of returning to it).⁷

The sample was stratified by regions and by type of settlement and representative quotas by sex and age within the regions. The two stages for ensuring the randomness of the sample were the selection of the household through a simple random household selection and the selection of respondents from the selected household. Phone numbers were selected from the database of all landline phone numbers belonging to the territory of Serbia, using a generator that randomly selects the phone number to call. At the last level of selection, within households, respondents were selected if they were 18 or older and if they were employed in February 2020. If several people in the same household corresponded to the target population, the interview was conducted with only one person, and the selection criterion was the date of birth (the interview was conducted with the person whose birthday was first in line from the date of the survey). The survey was conducted using the CATI (computer-assisted telephone interviewing) data collection method.⁸ A more detailed description of the sample is attached as Annex to this report.

Important notes on methodological differences compared to other statistics on (un)employment

It is very important to keep it in mind that the data from this survey, although using the same definitions of activity and employment as the Labour Force Survey (LFS), do not refer to the same indicators. While the LFS calculates activity, employment, unemployment and inactivity rates based on the total population aged 15 and over (or some narrower age groups, such as the 15-64 population or only young people aged 18-24), the rapid assessment conducted by SeConS does not register changes in the total employment or unemployment, **but monitors only the changes in those persons who were employed in February 2020, in the non-agricultural sector. Therefore, the data are not comparable with the Labour Force Survey, although they use the same definitions of employment and activity.** The data are also not comparable with the data obtained based on the RAD survey⁹ conducted by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) because the data from that survey refer only to formally employed people and registered sole proprietors. Data on persons who lost their jobs and are recorded by the SeConS survey are not comparable with the statistics on unemployed persons of the National Employment Service (NES), which includes only persons registered in the records of this service. In April, 513,052 unemployed people registered in the NES records, and out of the total number of people who reported to the employment service, 282,747 were women.¹⁰ It is possible that some people who are registered in the NES records still work informally while they are on the records, and on the other hand, it is known that not all unemployed people register with the NES but seek employment through other channels. It is particularly important to keep it in mind that the data from the SeConS survey refer exclusively to **mid-April 2020**,

⁷ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Labour Force Survey, methodological guide, available at <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2017/Pdf/G20177069.pdf>

⁸ The entire work procedure (CATI) is completely automated: from selection of the phone number to entering the data and checking the validity of the entered responses, and the administration of the questionnaire material is performed by the interviewer via a software programmed questionnaire on a computer, which allows for a high degree of control of data entry, as well as instant entry of information into a directly centralized database.

⁹ Registered employment

¹⁰ NES (2020), *Monthly Statistical Bulletin*, April 2020, available at:

http://www.nsz.gov.rs/live/digitalAssets/14/14484_statisti__ki_bilten_-_april_2020..pdf

while, for example, the data from the LFS for Q1 of 2020 refer to a **wider period (January-April)** and therefore show less steep changes.

2. SERBIA IN THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC FLOWS AND THE LABYRINTH OF GENDER INEQUALITIES

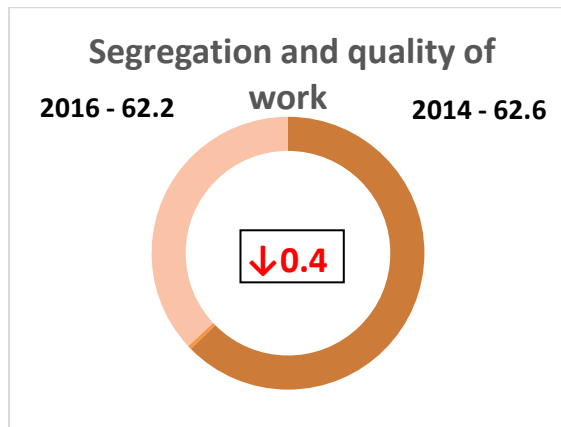
The research findings need to be considered in the context of long-term, structural processes and gender relations, i.e. gender regimes¹¹ in Serbia, but also the direct circumstances that arose under the impact of the pandemic and the Government measures in response to it, which made the characteristics of these long-term processes form distinctive everyday practices that were gender-specific and made the activities, risks, burdens of women and men not only different but also strengthened the already existing inequalities that always conceal unequal power balance.

It is well known that Serbia is characterized by pronounced gender inequalities. They have been proven and described by numerous scientific and applied studies, and since recently have also been monitored by the Gender Equality Index, a tool used in the EU and candidate countries, which measures the level of achievement and the gender gap in six main policy domains: work, money, time, knowledge, power and health, as well as in two satellite domains – intersecting inequalities and violence against women.¹² According to the latest Gender Equality Index from 2018, Serbia was still a country of pronounced gender inequalities in all domains. These inequalities were significantly more pronounced compared to the EU average, and progress has been made (compared to 2016), although very small. One of the main axes of inequality noted by the Index refers to gender segregation, which is established during education and continues later in the labour market, and precisely this axis of inequality is one of the fundamental ones for understanding the results of this research.

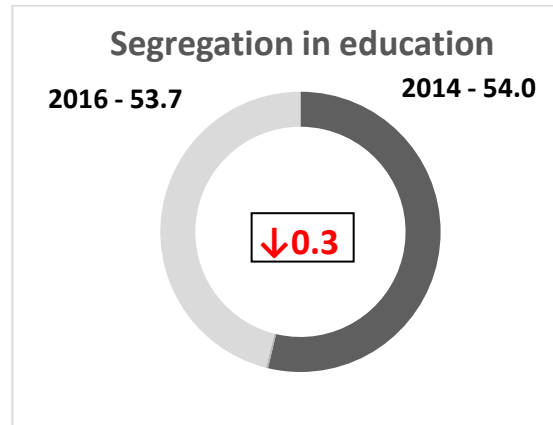
Chart 1: Gender Equality Index for Serbia, 2018, for the domain of work, sub-domain of segregation and quality of work and the domain of knowledge, sub-domain of segregation in education

¹¹ Gender regimes are understood to mean “relatively structured relations between men and women, masculinity and femininity, in the institutional and non-institutional environment, at the level of discourse and at the level of practice. This structuring is materialized in different gender roles, different gender identities and different gender representations...”. (Blagojević, M. (2002) “Men and women in Serbia 1990-2000: gendering the price of chaos”, in Bolčić, S, Milić, A. (ur.) Srbija krajem milenijuma: razaranje društva, promene i svakodnevni život“ [Serbia at the end of the millennium: destruction of society, changes and everyday life], ISIFF, Belgrade: 283-314).

¹² SIPRU (2018) *Gender Equality Index in the Republic of Serbia. Measuring gender equality in the Republic of Serbia 2016*, Belgrade.



of Serbia 2018.



Source: SIPRU, Gender Equality Index in the Republic

Inequalities are also present in the domain of power, where despite the progress in the representation of women in the sphere of political participation, there has been little or no progress in the domain of distribution of economic and social power. Inequalities are also visible in the domain of money, because women have lower incomes than men, and certain groups of women are also exposed to higher risks of poverty. Inequalities in the domain of time show how much time and work women spend in the household and family care, i.e. doing unpaid housework, which is the time usually taken away from their free activities (very important for well-being and personal development), as indicated by the Time Use Survey.¹³

Neither the pandemic nor the Government measures had a positive effect on reducing gender inequalities. On the contrary, they became more prominent in a specific context characterized by high risks of infection, especially among those who cared for the infected or had to perform other jobs with high risks of infection. They also became more prominent in a situation where numerous social services such as education, childcare, care for the elderly, people with disabilities, the ill, were transferred to the family, where these duties are extremely unequally distributed between women and men.

A brief history of the pandemic and the response to it

First registered case in the world: China, 7 January 2020¹⁴

First registered case in Europe: France, 24 January 2020¹⁵

WHO declares the pandemic: 11 March 2020¹⁶

First registered case in Serbia: Subotica, 6 March 2020¹⁷

¹³ SORS (2016) *Time Use in the Republic of Serbia in 2010 and 2015*, Belgrade, available at

https://rodnaravnopravnost.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2017-01/Kori%C5%A1%C4%87enje%20vremena%20u%20Republici%20Srbiji_0.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

¹⁵ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/01/2019-ncov-outbreak-first-cases-confirmed-in-europe>

¹⁶ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies>

¹⁷ <https://covid19.rs/%d0%bf%d0%be%d1%82%d0%b2%d1%80%d1%92%d0%b5%d0%bd-%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b2%d0%b8-%d1%81%d0%bb%d1%83%d1%87%d0%b0%d1%98-%d0%ba%d0%be%d1%80%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b0%d0%b2%d0%b8%d1%80%d1%83%d1%81%d0%b0-%d1%83-%d1%81/>

State of emergency declared: 15 March 2020¹⁸

Number of cases and deaths on 11 April 2020 (start date of the research): total number of cases is 3380, and total number of deaths is 74.¹⁹

Number of cases and deaths on 23 April 2020 (end date of the research): total number of cases is 7276, and total number of deaths is 139.²⁰

Number of cases and deaths on 7 May 2020 (date of lifting the state of emergency): total number of cases is 9848, and total number of deaths is 206.²¹

The response to the pandemic in Serbia followed the "restrictive model", which included a package of measures such as closing the borders, suspension of public transport to reduce the mobility of people, relatively strict restrictions on movement with periods of curfew and lockdowns lasting for several days. Measures also included the closing of all stores except stores selling food, relocation of work from offices to homes of employees, except in cases when it is not possible or when it is necessary to provide basic services, closing of educational institutions at all levels, abolition of public and social services in direct contact with citizens, etc.

This led to a significant reduction in business volume for most companies, while fewer came under pressure from increased work and increased demand, such as medical institutions, protective equipment and medical device factories and pharmaceutical distribution, but also delivery companies, platforms for online communication, etc. These changes affected the level of activity and employment, but also the quality of employment and working conditions.

The media report numerous analyses of economic effects of the pandemic and predictions of economic and social consequences. The truth is that they cannot be fully predicted at the moment. In the Monitor of global labour market developments during the COVID-19 pandemic from 29 April 2020, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the number of working hours globally decreased by 4.5% in Q1 of 2020, which is the equivalent of 130 million full-time jobs. The number of global working hours is expected to be 10.5% lower in Q2 of 2020 than in the pre-crisis quarter, which is equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs. The largest losses in this regard are projected for North, Central and South America (12.4%), as well as for Europe and Central Asia (11.8%) (ILO, 2020: 1). Vulnerable categories in the labour market are at particular risk. This primarily includes informal employees, with their number in the world being 1.6 billion according to ILO estimates. It is estimated that the relative poverty rate in this category will increase by 34%. (ILO, 2020: 2).

¹⁸ <https://www.propisi.net/odluka-o-proglasenju-vanrednog-stanja/>

¹⁹ <https://covid19.rs/%d0%b8%d0%bd%d1%84%d0%be%d1%80%d0%bc%d0%b0%d1%86%d0%b8%d1%98%d0%b5-%d0%be-%d0%ba%d0%be%d1%80%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b2%d0%b8%d1%80%d1%83%d1%81%d1%83-covid-19-11-04-2020-%d1%83-15-%d1%87%d0%b0%d1%81/>

²⁰ <https://covid19.rs/%d0%b8%d0%bd%d1%84%d0%be%d1%80%d0%bc%d0%b0%d1%86%d0%b8%d1%98%d0%b5-%d0%be-%d0%ba%d0%be%d1%80%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b2%d0%b8%d1%80%d1%83%d1%81%d1%83-covid-19-23-04-2020-%d1%83-15-%d1%87%d0%b0%d1%81/>

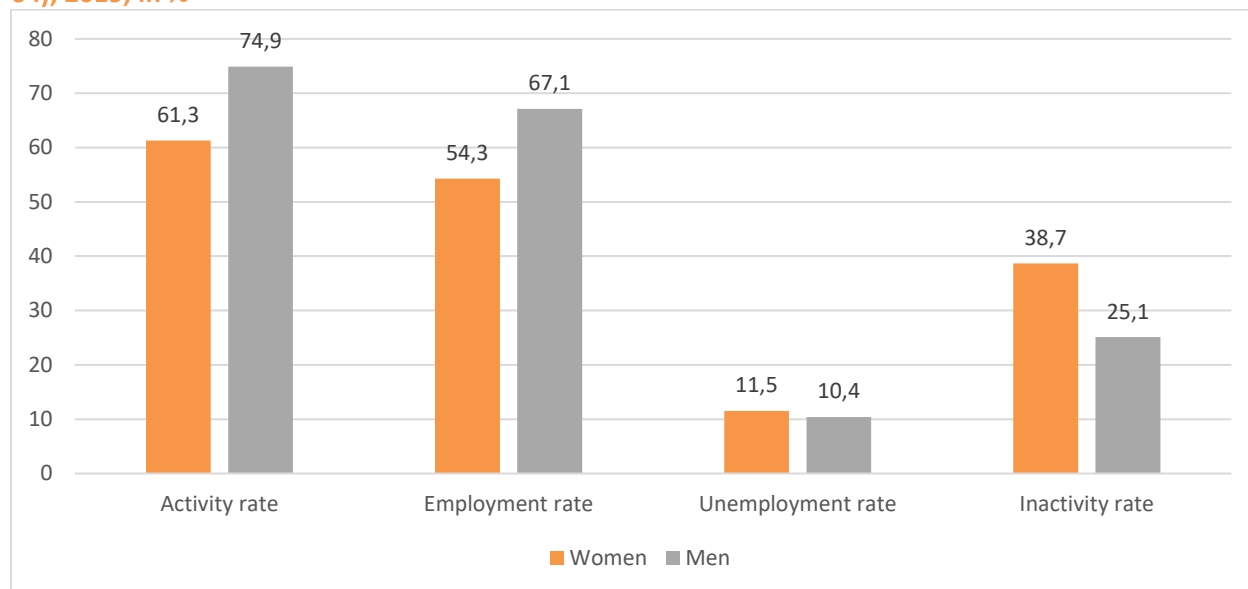
²¹ <https://www.propisi.net/skupstina-srbije-izglasala-ukidanje-vanrednog-stanja-u-republici-srbiji/>

3. JOB LOSSES DURING THE PANDEMIC

3.1 Proportions of job losses during the peak of the pandemic and the state of emergency

The employment gender gap is very pronounced in Serbia. According to the data from the Labour Force Survey, which is regularly conducted by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the gender gap in the level of activity and employment in 2019 was very pronounced. The activity and employment rates of men were significantly higher than the same rates of women, the differences in unemployment rates were not large, but this is because it is easier for women to become inactive, which is why their inactivity rate is significantly higher (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Activity, employment, unemployment and inactivity rates by sex, working-age population (15-64), 2019, in %



Source: SORS, LFS, 2019, p. 14-15.

The data presented in the previous chart refer to the annual level, which means that they level the seasonal variations that may occur in different quarters, especially under the influence of the economic sectors whose employment dynamics depend on the season, such as agricultural production, tourism, hospitality, etc.

That is why it is important to compare the data of the two adjacent quarters, i.e. Q4 of 2019 (October-December 2019) and Q1 of 2020 (January-April 2020), in which the changes caused by the pandemic and the state of emergency actually manifested. We should have it in mind that the data in the following table (Table 1) refer to the population aged 15 and over and not the working-age population (15-64) as in the previous chart. This is an important difference, because in the population over the age of 64, activity and employment are mainly related to the population working in agriculture on family farms, which was not covered by the SeConS survey.

According to the LFS data from Q1 of 2020 (January-April), there was a bigger decline in the level of activity and employment among men than women. The contingent of active men decreased by 60,400 people (-3.3 percentage points), and the contingent of active women decreased by 4,100 people (-0.3 percentage points). This means that these people exited the group of employed and unemployed people and moved to inactive people, i.e. those who neither performed any activity (formal or informal) nor sought employment. The contingent of employed men decreased between the two quarters by 58,400 people (-3.6 pp) and for women by 2,500 people (-0.2 pp). At the same time, the number of unemployed people decreased both among women (by 1,700 people or -1.1 pp) and among men (by 2,100 people or -1.3 pp). The largest change and gender difference was recorded in the contingent of inactive people, because among women, who have more inactive people, there was no change (increase of 200 inactive people is negligible), while among men there was an increase in the contingent of inactive people by 56,900 people or 5.4 percentage points.

It should be noted once again that the LFS is conducted continuously and records the situation in the week before the survey, which means that the data presented refer to the entire period of January-April 2020 and therefore do not reflect the situation that occurred during the peak of the pandemic in April, nor do they fully reflect the consequences that the pandemic and the state of emergency had on employment and the labour market.

So, having in mind the LFS findings, the changes in the level of activity and employment took place primarily in the male workforce, in the direction of the increase of inactivity and decrease of employment, although unemployment also decreased somewhat. The changes were much lower in the female workforce. Although more detailed statistics on changes by sectors, occupations, occupational status of the workforce were not published at the time of writing of this report, it can be assumed that the reason for smaller changes in the female workforce was that the sectors in which women make up the majority of employees were of particular importance during the pandemic, such as health care, where there was a greater demand for labour, and that they managed to largely maintain employment due to their greater concentration in the public sector. However, as it will be seen later from SeConS research data, neither women nor men are a homogeneous category and different segments within the female and male workforce were affected in different ways by the pandemic and the Government measures.

Table 1: Main contingents of the workforce aged 15 and over by sex and basic labour market indicators for the population aged 15 and over, Q4 of 2019 and Q1 of 2020

Labour market status	Q4 of 2019				Q1 of 2020				Change in rates compared to the previous quarter in pp	
	Women		Men		Women		Men		W	M
	N	Share (%)	N	Share (%)	N	Share (%)	N	Share (%)		
Active	1,446,600	47.3	1,805,700	63.3	1,442,500	47.2	1,745,300	61.3	-0.3	-3.3
Employed	1,297,600	42.4	1,640,700	57.5	1,295,100	42.4	1,582,300	55.5	-0.2	-3.6
Unemployed	149,000	10.3	165,000	9.1	147,400	10.2	163,000	9.3	-1.1	-1.3
Inactive	1,613,500	52.7	1,047,200	36.7	1,613,700	52.8	1,104,100	38.7	0.0	5.4

Source: SORS, LFS Q4 of 2019²², and LFS Q1 of 2020²³

According to the results of the SeConS research from April 2020, **among the women and men who were employed in the non-agricultural sector in February of this year, 8.2% of people lost their jobs.** It should be noted once again that employment is in accordance with the definition used in the LFS, which is far broader than the formally employed people.²⁴ Differences between men and women are not statistically significant, although among women in the sample there are slightly more of those who were out of work in April than among men (8.4% vs 7.9%). There are some differences in the reasons for job losses, although

²² Accessed on 30 May 2019 at <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Xls/G20201051.xlsx>

²³ Accessed on 30 May 2019 at <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Xls/G20201135.xlsx>

²⁴ "Employed persons are persons who have, during at least one hour in the reference week, performed paid job (in cash or in kind), and persons who have a job but were absent from it during that week. Employed people, in addition to people who have established employment and work in a company, institution or another type of organization or work as private entrepreneurs, include individual farmers, assisting household members, as well as persons who have performed some work they independently found and contracted (orally or in writing) without formal employment and for whom that work represented the only source of livelihoods. Therefore, the Survey does not take into account the formal status of the person being interviewed, but the employment status of that person is determined based on the real activity they performed in the reference week." (SORS, LFS methodological guide, p. 2, accessed on 30 May, 2019 at <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2017/Doc/G201720107.docx>)

they are not statistically significant. Among men who lost their jobs, a slightly more common reason is being laid off because the company suspended its activities, as well as their short-term employment contract expiring without being renewed. Among women, a slightly more common reason is quitting due to inability to come to work in the conditions of limited movement and absence of public transport, as well as due to the inability to organize child care in the conditions when kindergartens and schools are closed (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Reasons for job loss by sex, in %



Source: SeConS research, April 2020

These findings show once again the extent to which family care can be a barrier to women's employment, as well as the importance of addressing inequalities in access to transportation, which make it more difficult for women to access jobs or other social resources and activities. Analysis of the position of young

women in the labour market²⁵ conducted on the 2018 LFS data showed that among inactive women aged 25-29, more than a third (36%) are not seeking employment due to child care and another 13% due to other personal and family reasons. Half of these women already have previous work experience, which indicates their readiness to be active in the labour market, and most often they stopped working because they were laid off or the job was temporary, and not due to family care. However, caring for the family, especially children, really is an important factor limiting their ability to (re)activate in the labour market, as indicated by the fact that 67% of women of this age who do not work and do not look for work claim that the reason for that is the lack of appropriate childcare services that are not available to them or are not cost-effective, and 5% say that the reason is the lack of such support services for the care of the elderly, the ill, people with disabilities in the household. So, even in regular circumstances, family care is a significant factor that influences women's decisions to get a job. In the conditions when access to services for child care or care for other family members needing care was unavailable, a number of women withdrew from the labour market.

When it comes to access to transportation, a recent survey on gender equality in traffic²⁶ showed that women are less likely to own vehicles and driver's licenses than men, they mostly come to work by public transport, while men most often use their vehicles to come to work. According to the data from the Traffic Police Directorate for 2019, which were requested for this study, 71% of men and only 35% of women have a driver's license for cars, which means that for two-thirds of women this basic prerequisite for using a car as a means of transport is not met, so very often they depend on other drivers in the household or outside the household. In the conditions when public transport was temporarily suspended, that was an insurmountable obstacle for a certain number of women for coming to work, so they decided to quit it.

3.2 Which groups of employed women and men were most affected by job losses?

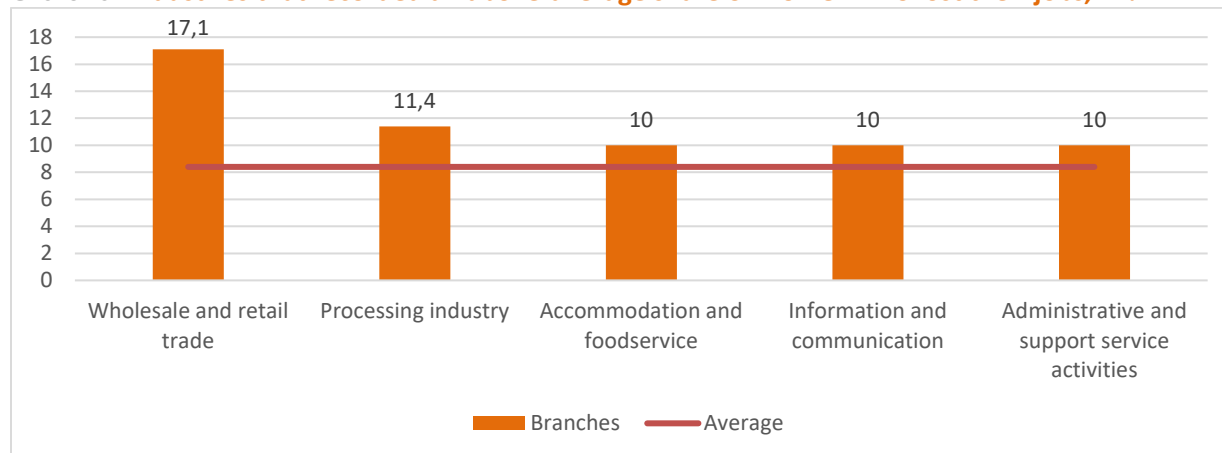
Job losses particularly affected employees in certain industries, such as trade (all stores except those with basic products, food and hygiene products were closed), processing industry, accommodation and foodservice (hospitality establishments were also closed). Both women and men employed in these sectors were severely affected by job losses. However, some differences are observed, caused by the patterns of gender segregation in the labour market. Among employed women, in addition to those employed in the mentioned industries, women employed in the information and communication sector and administrative and support service activities were also more affected by job losses, while among employed men, those working in construction were particularly affected (Charts 4a and 4b).

²⁵ Babović, M. (2019) *Zatvaranje kruga: položaj žena na tržištu rada na početku i kraju karijere [Closing the circle: position of women in the labour market at the beginning and at the end of their careers]*, Žene na prekretnici, BTĐ, SeConS, Belgrade, available at

<http://www.zenenaprekretnici.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Zene-plus-45-cele-publikacija.pdf>

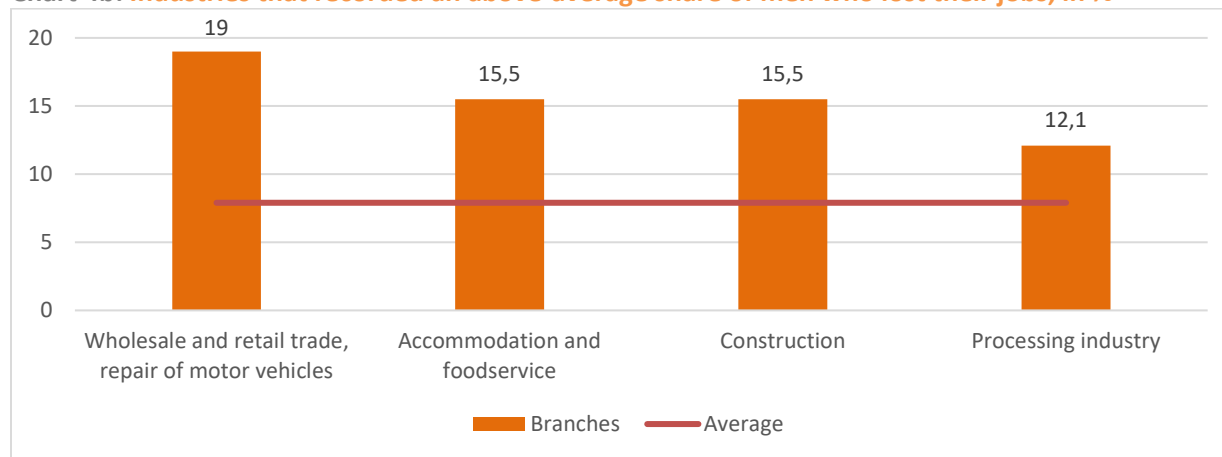
²⁶ SeConS and Dornier Consulting International. (2019). *Rodna ravnopravnost u saobraćaju u Srbiji [Gender equality in traffic in Serbia]*, Belgrade: Coordination Body for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. The study is available at <https://secons.net/files/publications/109-publication.pdf>

Chart 4a: Industries that recorded an above-average share of women who lost their jobs, in %



Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

Chart 4b: Industries that recorded an above-average share of men who lost their jobs, in %



Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

Among employed women and men, the same categories of employees were more often exposed to job loss:

- self-employed people who do not employ other workers were more likely to lose their jobs than people working for employers;
- people who were informally employed or were employed with short-term and fixed-term contracts were more likely to lose their jobs than people with permanent contracts;
- people employed in private companies were more likely to lose their jobs than people employed in public enterprises;
- people employed in micro and small companies were more likely to lose their jobs than employees in large companies;
- certain categories of employees performing occupations such as service workers (e.g. workers in personal services, transport and tourism, hospitality, etc.), workers in trade, machine workers, simple occupations (such as cleaners, persons maintaining other people's households, auxiliary

workers in agriculture, maintenance of public space, collectors of secondary raw materials, etc.), were more likely to lose their jobs than people who performed other occupations.

However, in addition to these common risks, there are some gender-specific risks. In the categories of self-employed people without employed workers, there are slightly more women than men who lost their jobs (18.8% vs 14.3%). Among men, the category of self-employed people who employ other workers was not among those affected by job loss above the average, but it was among women – 10% of women entrepreneurs who employ other people had to close their businesses (more information on the impact of the pandemic and the Government measures on women's entrepreneurship can be found in a separate report).

The share of men employed on fixed-term contracts or part-time basis who lost their jobs is higher than among women who were employed in the same way. 17.8% of men employed on fixed-term contracts and 30.6% employed on part-time basis lost their jobs, and among women employed on fixed-term contracts, 10% lost their jobs, while 21.74% of those who worked part-time lost their jobs. Among employed men, employees in mixed enterprises (18.2%) and private companies (9.1%) were more likely to lose their jobs, while among employed women, the largest impact of job losses was recorded among employees in private companies (43.6%). Although the Government adopted measures to encourage the private sector to continue working and to prevent layoffs (delayed payments of taxes and contributions on wages, direct benefits to companies, etc.), they were not successful enough. In order to be eligible for state support, private companies were not allowed to lay off more than 10% of employees. However, this number does not include those employees whose fixed-term contracts expired during the state of emergency. This means that the employer was able to be eligible for measures even if more than 10% of employees stopped working, if some of their employment contracts were simply not renewed, which, as the research data show, was often the case (Chart 3). On the other hand, it should be noted that the Government's measures were not mandatory, so every employer in the private sector was able to assess the extent to which maintaining employment was necessary for their survival and realization of the company's interests.

Job losses hit 12.7% of men and 15.3% of women employed in micro-enterprises (with less than 10 employees), as well as 11.9% of men and 11% of women employed in small enterprises (between 10 and 50 employees). Observed by occupations, the most affected men were employees in trade, hospitality and men performing simple occupations, while among women the most affected were those employed as clerks, trade and service workers, machine workers and women performing simple occupations (such as cleaners, etc.).

The average age of women who lost their jobs is 39.63 and for men, it's 38.45. Differences between women and men by the type of settlement are not significant – among women who lost their jobs, 45.7% live in the countryside and among men, this number is 48.3%. Among women, the largest share is recorded by those with secondary education (52.9%) and among men, it is equally divided by those with secondary and higher/university education (48.3% each).

Thus, the presented data indicate similar patterns of exposure to job loss risks among women and men, with more vulnerable categories of employees being exposed to job loss more often in both cases. However, gender-specific differences can also be noted, primarily in the fact that different forms of self-

employment are more fragile among women and they are more likely to get in trouble during crises, that women in private companies are particularly exposed to the risk of losing their jobs, and that clerks and factory workers, along with trade and service workers, as well as persons performing simple occupations, are also at higher risk.

3.3 Job seeking

Although the risk of infection was at its peak at the time of conducting the research, and population movement was very limited, 27.6% of men and 27.1% of women who lost their jobs immediately started looking for a new job, which is not surprising, given that vulnerable categories of employees have lost their jobs more often. Job seeking methods differ significantly between women and men. Although the most common way for both women and men to look for a job is to browse and respond to advertisements in newspapers and employment websites, one in four men also relies on the National Employment Service. In addition, men rely much more often than women on people from their surrounding (friends, acquaintances). On the other hand, women more often than men address employers directly.

Table 2: Share of women and men seeking new employment, in %

Job seeking method	Women	Men
Through the NES	-	25.0
Through friends, acquaintances	36.8	50.0
Through newspapers, employment websites	84.2	68.8
By addressing employers directly	42.1	37.5

Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

After losing their jobs, 22.4% of men and 15.7% of women applied to the National Employment Service for unemployment benefits, eligible for which are only those unemployed persons who have previously had “mandatory unemployment insurance for at least 12 months continuously, or with interruptions in the last 18 months.”²⁷

Although most unemployed women and men are optimistic about finding a new job, it is noticed that optimism is more common among men, because 88% of them expect to find a new job in the next 6 months, while the same is true for 76% of women. There are no significant differences between women and men who lost their jobs in terms of concerns about finding a new job. Almost half of them in both cases are slightly worried (47.1% of women and 44.8% of men), about one in five are very worried (22.9% of women and 20.7% of men), while the rest are not worried at all (30% of women and 34.5% of men).

²⁷ http://www.nsz.gov.rs/live/trazite-posao/dok-trazite-posao/nezaposleni/nov_ana_naknada.cid245

4. WORKPLACE CHANGES CAUSED BY COVID-19

4.1 Exposure of women and men to various workplace changes

The COVID-19 pandemic affected not only the level of employment but also led to significant changes in terms of the way work is organized, the place where work is conducted, as well as the working conditions of employees in Serbia. The most common changes were switching to working from home and reducing the working hours or reducing the number of shifts, but there is also a number of women and men who voluntarily or forcibly used their annual leave, those whose salary was reduced or working hours were increased, as well as those whose work was temporarily suspended (Table 3).

Table 3: Share of employees exposed to various workplace changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, by sex, in %

What changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? ²⁸	Women	Men
Nothing changed	25.4	28.9
Switched to working from home	27.2	22.6
Relocated to another location, to another facility	3.0	1.5

²⁸ Respondents had the opportunity to give several answers, if there were several changes in their workplace, which is why the total in the table exceeds 100%.

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Reassigned to another job, with similar qualifications	1.6	0.6
Reduced working hours or number of shifts	22.8	28.3
Increased working hours or number of shifts	5.3	4.5
Reduced salary	4.2	7.3
Forced to use the annual leave	5.5	5.5
Agreed with the employer to voluntarily use the annual leave to share the burden with the employer	4.7	3.6
Forced to take unpaid leave	2.2	3.1
Work currently suspended	5.6	3.3

Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

Working from home before the pandemic was common for a very small share of employed citizens of Serbia. According to the research data, before COVID-19 hit Serbia, less than 2% of employees worked from home. In April 2020, a significant share of employees worked from home, with women being somewhat more affected by this change than men – 22.6% of men and 27.2% of women worked from home.

The switch to working from home was most often made in the sector of education, information and communication, professional, scientific and technical activities, while in the other economic sectors, working from home was still reserved for a minority of employees. The education sector was particularly affected by this change, due to the closure of educational institutions and transition to online classes – 72% of women and 84% of men employed in this sector switched to working from home. Half of the men employed in the information and communication sector and slightly more than half of women employed in this sector (54%) switched to working from home. Men performing professional, scientific and technical activities were more likely to switch to working from home (47% of them) than women from the same sector (32% of them).

Women and men employed in the public sector were more likely to switch to working from home than employees in the private sector. Actually, during the state of emergency, about one in three employees in the public sector switched to working from home – 34% of women and 31% of men. Although the share of employees who switched to working from home is lower both among men and women, gender differences are somewhat more pronounced than in the case of the public sector – one in four women and less one in five men (18%) employed in the private sector.

Employed women and men living in urban settlements were more likely to switch to working from home than those living in rural settlements. However, it has been shown that for men, the type of settlement is more directly related to the transition to working from home than it is for women. Among men from urban settlements, 30% worked from home in April, while this share was significantly lower among men from rural settlements (13%). The differences between women from rural and urban settlements are far smaller. Both among employed men and women, most of those who switched to working from home were from the region of Vojvodina, while this is the least common case with men living in the region of Western Serbia and Šumadija (12% of them).

Significant gender differences are observed when it comes to reducing working hours or the number of shifts. While this change affected 28.3% of men employed in the non-agricultural sector, in the case of women in the same category, the share was lower (22.8%). Women and men working in the sector of trade and repair of motor vehicles were more likely to have reduced working hours or reduced number of shifts, compared to other sectors (38% of women and 41% of men in the trade sector worked shorter hours or fewer shifts). On the other hand, the least affected by this change were employees in the information and communication sector.

As expected, **women and men employed in the private sector, were far more likely to have their monthly incomes reduced** compared to employees in the public sector. One in ten men and 7% of women employed in the private sector received a lower salary in April than in the regular circumstances, while this was the case with only 1% of women and 3% of men employed in the public sector.

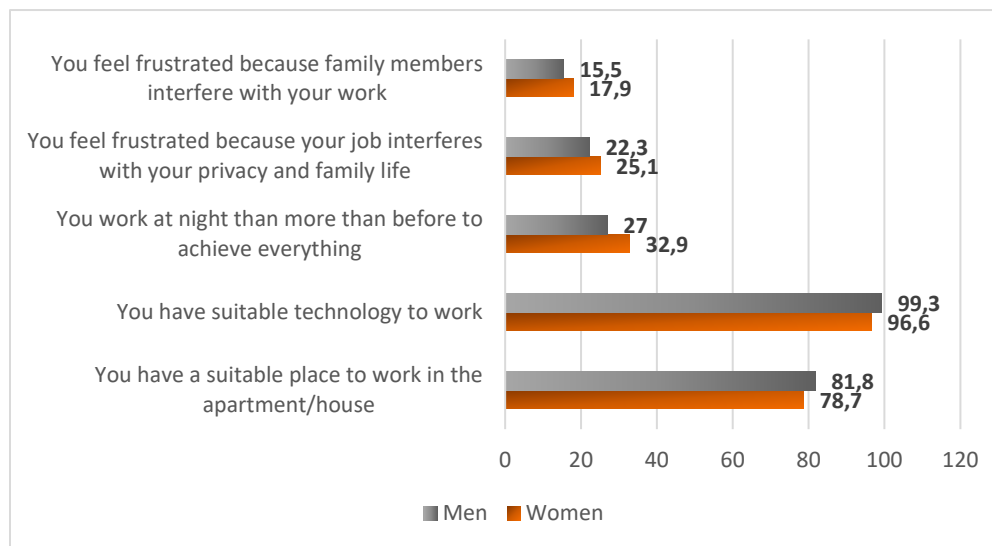
4.2 Does working from home suit everyone?

In order to organize the work so that the exposure of employees to health risks is reduced to a minimum, working from home was one of the most common solutions chosen by employers, in cases when it was possible to reorganize the work in that way. Although working from home has its advantages, it also brings certain challenges that need to be overcome. The first condition for performing work activities at home is having the necessary tools for work, such as a computer, internet access, smartphone, etc., as well as an adequate place to work in the apartment or house. Research data showed that almost all respondents who worked from home had the appropriate technology to work. However, the share of women who have adequate technology at home is slightly lower than the share of men (96.6% vs 99.3%). About four in five respondents said that they had a suitable place to work in the apartment/house, while the rest said that this was not the case. Gender differences in this aspect are very small, although there are slightly fewer women who have a place in the apartment where they can dedicate themselves to professional duties (Chart 5).

When working from home, a great challenge lies in separating the private from the business sphere, i.e. the possibility of smooth performance of business activities, with the presence of other household members and the increased volume of the household work. More women than men said they had to work at night more than before in order to get everything done (32.9% vs 27%). In addition, there are slightly more women who said they felt frustrated because family members interfered with their work (17.9%) compared to men (15.5%). Approximately one in four women (25.1%) felt frustrated when working from home, because their work interfered with their privacy and family life, while for men this share was slightly lower (22.3%) (Chart 5). Significant differences are observed when looking at the household size, with women from households with four and five members finding it the most difficult to separate work from the private sphere – as many as 39.5% of women from this category said they felt frustrated because their work interfered with privacy and family life (versus 21% of men). Also, 26.7% of women and 22.6% of men from households with four or five members felt frustrated because family members disturbed them during work and their work suffered as a result.

Chart 5: **Does any of the above apply to respondents who worked from home? (in %)**

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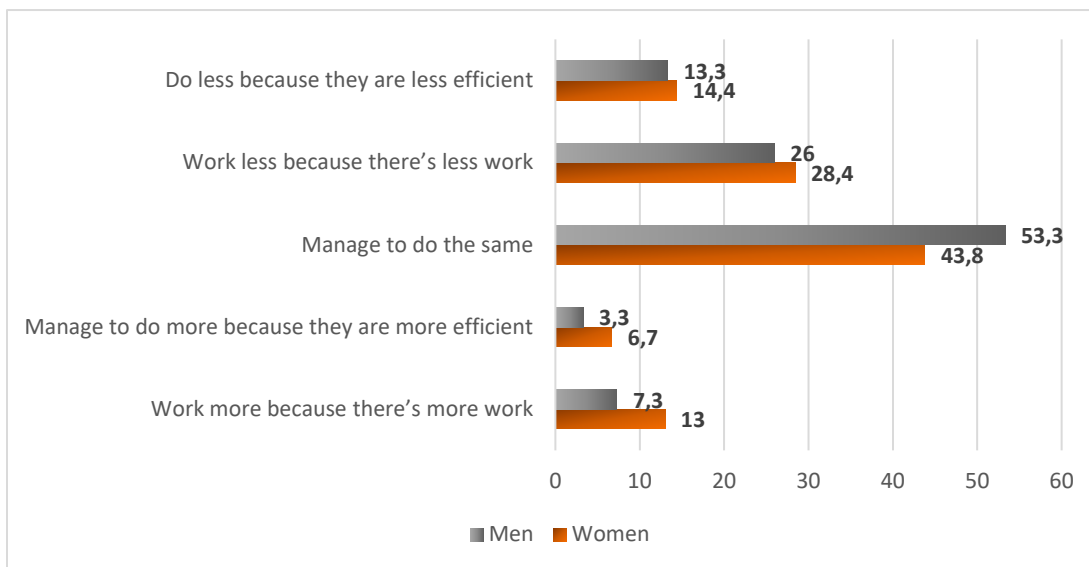


Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

In terms of productivity and efficiency, it is observed that women have a significantly lower share of those without any change than men – 53.3% of men and 43.8% of women said that they managed to do the same work like before the pandemic while working from home. A significant share of both men and women worked less from home than in the regular circumstances because the volume of work was reduced (28.4% of women and 26% of men), while some worked less because they were less efficient (14.4% women and 13.3% men). On the other hand, a smaller share of respondents said that they worked more from home because they were more efficient, and this is twice as often the case among women than men (6.7% of women and 3.3% of men).

Women were more likely than men to work more because there was more work (13% of women versus 7.3% of men). This finding should be interpreted having in mind the sectoral distribution of employed women and men, as well as the activities they perform. Women working in the public sector were disproportionately more likely to say that they worked more due to the increased workload (22.9%), especially women engaged in educational activities (24.1% of them). Given that women are the majority in this sector, it is completely clear why they were particularly burdened when the education system found itself under great pressure and in a transition to a new way of working. Finally, women from rural settlements were significantly more likely to say that they worked more from home because they had more work (21.9% of them) than men living in the same type of settlement (10.8%), but also in comparison to women living in urban settlements (9% of them).

Chart 6: How does working from home affect productivity and efficiency? (in %)



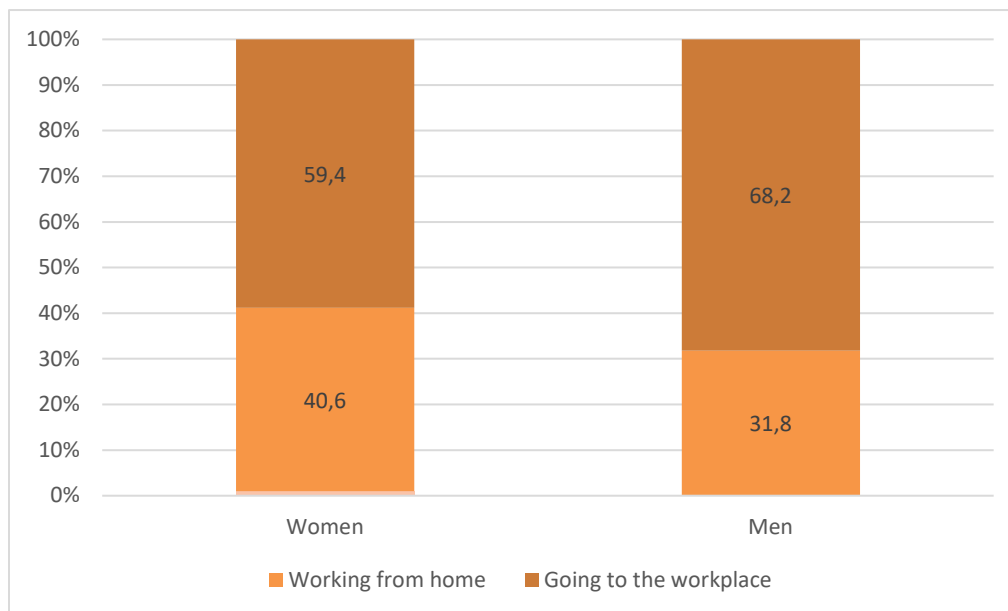
Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

4.3 What were the working conditions of those who had to come to work?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant part of the employed population had to continue coming to work, because there was no possibility to organize work differently. Not only did they continue coming to work, but they were often exposed to additional challenges or changed working conditions. In this respect, there are significant gender differences, as there were more employed men who continued coming to work than employed women (Chart 7).

Chart 7: Employees by sex and place of work, in %

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Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

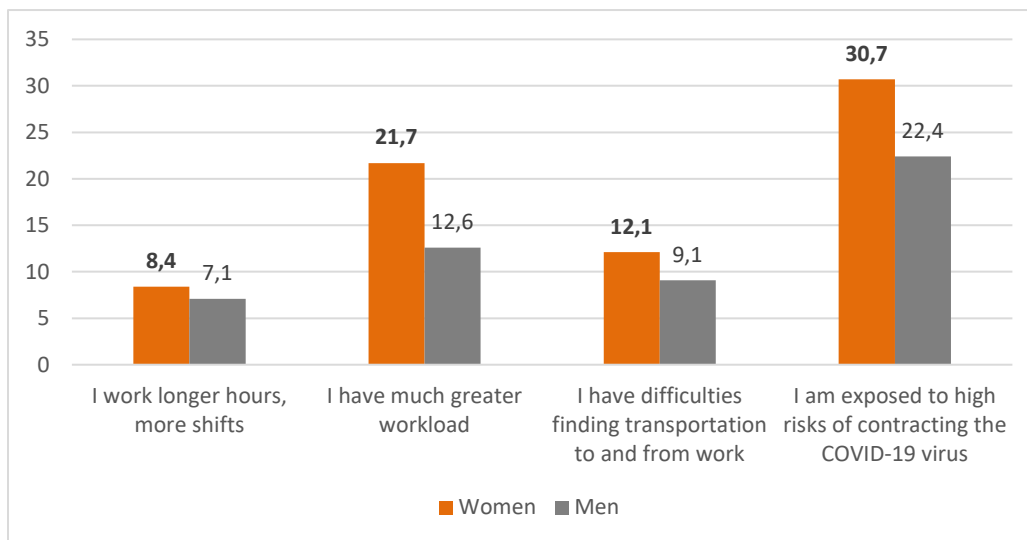
Women who continued coming to work were most often employed in health care (27%), trade (22%), processing industry (15%), and to a lesser extent in public administration, professional, scientific and technical activities (7% each), as well as in the financial sector (5%). Men who continued coming to work were most often employed in the processing industry (25%), trade (18%), transport and storage (10%), public administration (8%), and administrative and support service activities (6%).

More than one in five women who had to come to work during the pandemic (21.7%) said that they had a far greater workload than before, while in the case of men who had to go to work, that share was 12.6%. **Employees in the trade sector** (salespeople and other employees in shops, supermarkets, pharmacies and other commercial establishments) **and health care** (doctors, nurses and other medical staff), **who were on the first line of exposure to health risks, were far more likely, above the average, to say that they had a greater workload.** However, when taking into account the sex of the respondents, it is observed that women employed in the trade sector were significantly more exposed than men from the same sector – 31.4% of women versus 11.3% of men working in the trade sector had a significantly higher workload during the pandemic compared to regular circumstances.

Among employees who continued coming to work, and who said that they worked longer or had more shifts, no significant gender differences were observed. When it comes to finding transportation to work, women who had to come to work found it somewhat more difficult than men to find a suitable transport option – 12.1% of women and 9.3% of men said it was difficult to find transportation to work. Significantly more women than men said they believed that they were exposed to health risks at work – 30.7% and 22.4% (Chart 8). This piece of data is not surprising, considering that women are more represented in jobs that involved exposure to higher health risks (in trade and health care).

Chart 8: **What changed in the working conditions compared to the period before the pandemic? (in %)**

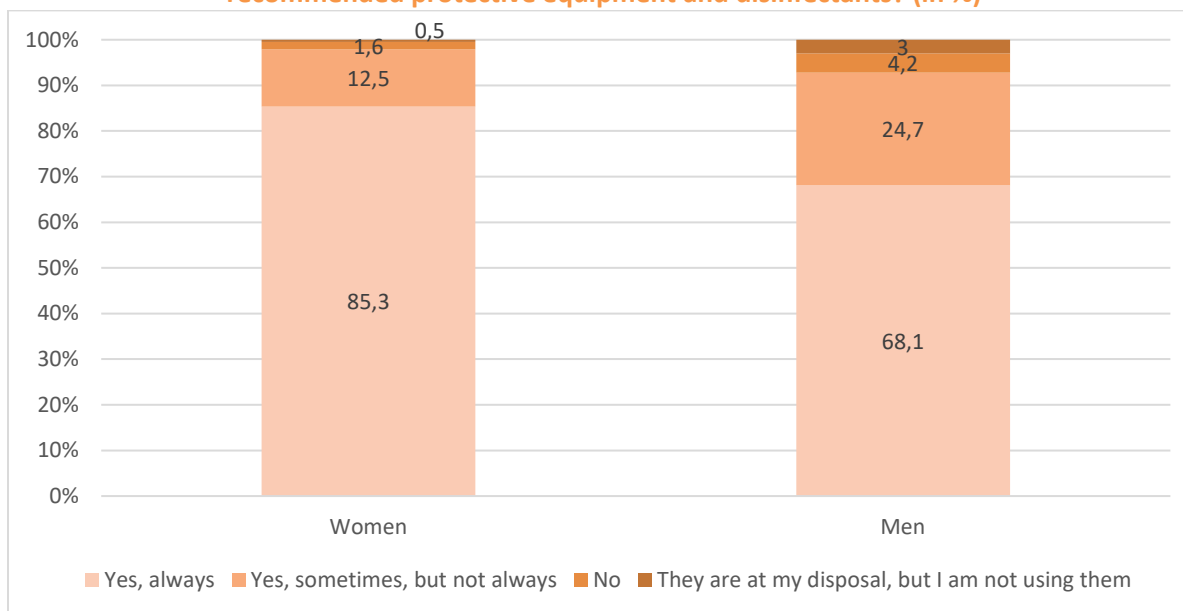
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Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

When it comes to the measures taken by employers to minimize the exposure of employees to the risk of infection, research data show that most employers did provide sufficient protective equipment and disinfectants for their employees. However, some employers did not follow even these basic recommendations, and some did not take a single recommended measure (neither providing adequate protective equipment nor reorganizing work so as to maintain the recommended physical distance). Among employees whose work environment is such that it involves contact with more people, 3.2% said that there was not enough protective equipment and disinfectants.

Chart 9: Do employed respondents who work in a space with many other people use the recommended protective equipment and disinfectants? (in %)



Source: SeConS research, April 2020.

On the other hand, there are employees who did not behave responsibly enough in the workplace, i.e. they did not regularly use protective equipment and disinfectants, even though they were provided. According to the research data, women were a bit more diligent than men. While the recommended protective equipment was always used by 85.3% of women who worked in the space with many other people during the pandemic, this was the case with 68.1% of men from the same category. On the other hand, twice as few women than men said that they used protective equipment occasionally, and among men, there is a larger share of those who did not use protective equipment, which is very worrying (Chart 9).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Government's measures in response to it opened Pandora's box of gender inequalities in the labour market. Data from the Labour Force Survey for Q1 (January-April) of 2020 indicate that the male workforce was more affected by the changes and that the most pronounced change was the transition of almost 70,000 active men to the inactive contingent. These data do not fully reflect the effects of the pandemic, because they include data from the period that preceded it. Data from the SeConS research, which do not refer to the entire population but only to those employed in February 2020, indicate that the rate of job loss among men and women was the same, that some effects were the same for women and men, but that there were also significant gender differences in a number of aspects due to long-standing structural gender inequalities in the labour market.

Reasons for job losses are not gender-neutral. Although both among the laid-off women and men the most were laid off because the company where they worked suspended its activities, the share of these people is larger among employed men, while the reasons among women are more likely to be related to their traditional leading role in caring for the family and poorer access to resources such as transportation. In the conditions when child care services and public transport were suspended, the burden of care was completely transferred to families, and employees were left to fend of themselves in providing transportation to work. This disproportionately affected women, who mostly perform activities related to child care, and who mostly use public transport to go to work because they are far less likely to have driver's licenses or cars than men.

The most affected by job losses were employees in wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and foodservice, processing industry, both among employed women and among employed men. Gender specifics are visible in the fact that job loss among women also particularly affected the sector of information and communication, as well as the sector of administrative and support service activities, and the construction sector among men.

Similar patterns of exposure to job loss risks were registered among women and men because more vulnerable categories of employees were exposed to job loss more often in both cases. This includes self-employed people who do not employ other workers, persons employed with short-term contracts or informally employed, persons employed in private companies, micro and small enterprises, service, trade, factory workers, as well as people performing simple occupations such as cleaners, auxiliary, manual labour workers.

However, gender-specific differences can also be noted in job loss risks, primarily in the fact that different forms of self-employment are more fragile among women and they are more likely to get in trouble during crises, that women in private companies are particularly exposed to the risk of losing their jobs, and that clerks and factory workers, along with trade and service workers, as well as persons performing simple occupations, are also at higher risk.

Only a small share of those who lost their jobs sought new employment in April, and women relied more on their own initiatives than on the National Employment Service and showed a more proactive approach by browsing ads and addressing employers directly. Significantly fewer women applied to the NES for unemployment benefits compared to men who lost their jobs, which may be due to their disadvantaged position in the labour market and legal requirements that stipulate that only persons who have been formally employed for at least 12 months continuously or for 18 months with interruptions are entitled to this benefit.

Women were more often exposed to changes in working conditions than men. More women switched to working from home, which is due to the concentration of women in the sectors where this measure was used, such as education, administrative activities, public administration. **Women were more often frustrated than men with inadequate working conditions at home, due to the lack of adequate space (quiet corner for work) or family members disturbing them, especially among those living in bigger families.** They also worked more often at night in order to be able to complete all work assignments. On the other hand, **men were more likely to have working hours or the number of shifts reduced, but also to have their salary reduced.**

Although there were slightly more men who continued going to work, there were more women who went to workplaces with an increased risk of infection due to contact with a larger number of people. Women who had to come to work were most often employed in health care, trade, then in the processing industry, and fewer of them in the public administration, financial sector. Men who continued coming to work were most often employed in the processing industry, trade, transport and storage, and then in the public administration and administrative and support service activities.

Women who had to go to work used protective equipment in a more disciplined way than men. Although most employers provided appropriate protective equipment for both women and men, a higher share of women than men used the equipment regularly. It is possible that this better discipline was also prompted by greater risks due to a greater concentration of women in health care and trade.

More women said they worked harder during the pandemic because there was more work, than it was the case among men. This is also due to the fact that women are particularly concentrated in sectors that were exposed to a greater burden, such as health care, education and parts of trade activities that continued operating in the state of emergency.

5.2 Recommendations

Bearing in mind that the gender-specific effects of the pandemic on employees have their roots in deeper and long-lasting gender inequalities, it is necessary to separate the recommendations related to the measures used in the pandemic from those targeting the causes of long-term structural inequalities. Therefore, the first set of recommendations is focused on solutions that should be kept in mind in case of

a new wave of the pandemic, while the second set refers to measures that seek to eliminate gender inequalities in the labour market, indicated by the findings of this research, in the medium term.

Recommendations for work in the pandemic conditions

- In case of kindergartens and schools closure due to the pandemic, it is necessary for companies to introduce measures that would primarily help employed parents who have to come work and do not have another family member to take care of the children. This is primarily the case with single parents. Along with work shift flexibility, which would be necessary whenever the type of work allows it, companies should be encouraged to develop some alternative models of childcare while parents are at work. For example, for parents who have to come to work and don't have anyone to leave their children with, a special service could be developed within the company that would include organizing child care on a one-on-one basis – one person looks after one or several children, but only if they are from the same family (the service does not have to be physically provided in the company if there are no conditions for that). For childcare needs of employees, companies could hire a part of persons (mostly women) who informally provide these services in households in normal circumstances, and who were almost completely unable to work during the pandemic. Introduction of such a support measure should be subsidized by the state and help establish a system of linking companies and persons providing childcare services.
- The research has shown that inadequate transportation is one of the important barriers to going to work in the pandemic, especially for the female workforce. That is why it is important for the state and employers to provide appropriate transport options for people who have to come to work, having in mind the type of settlement in which the employees live (urban or rural area). All companies should provide collective transport (bus, van, etc.) for employees who are not able to come to their workplace in any other way. Also, instead of suspending public transport lines, additional lines should be introduced during the pandemic and the frequency of buses should be increased, which would at the same time reduce the number of passengers in individual vehicles and enable adhering to the recommended physical distance.
- Since it has been shown that people with job insecurity, especially those who are informally employed or employed with short-term contracts, are particularly vulnerable in a pandemic, measures need to be designed to cover these particularly vulnerable categories of women and men. Instead of linear distribution of the same amount of money to all adult citizens, cash benefits should be distributed more fairly and directed to those who need help the most. One of the categories that needs special support and higher financial resources are households with no formally employed person or person with a steady income (pension).
- Due to the increased workload in health care, trade and education sectors, additional workforce is needed in the event of a pandemic. In the health care sector, the practice of hiring additional staff should be maintained. If possible, courses for procedures during the epidemic should also be organized for citizens to regularly attend them on a voluntary basis, thus gaining knowledge useful in the event of an epidemic. In order to respond to the increased pressure on the trade sector, unemployed persons and students should be hired part-time or through youth cooperatives in retail establishments where additional workforce is needed (supermarkets, food stores, pharmacies, etc.). For the education sector, university students from appropriate departments should be hired for the position of educational assistants, which would provide

support not only to children but also to parents. When hiring additional workforce in each of these three sectors, men should be especially encouraged to apply for these positions in order to reduce the gender gap. It is also necessary to support civic volunteer initiatives in such periods, which provide important forms of support to various groups of citizens, such as supply, meal preparation, information dissemination, etc.

- It is necessary to urge employers to consult their employees when organizing work from home, in order to take into account their needs and to enable them to better harmonize their professional and family obligations. For example, more modalities should be developed and offered to employees, whenever possible, to choose the one that would suit them the most (for example, flexible working hours, fixed working hours, split shifts, etc.).
- It is important to design measures and activities that would encourage redistribution of housework and childcare work during the pandemic, when the amount of household work additionally increases. For example, it is possible to promote examples of good practice through the media or organize campaigns to reduce gender inequalities in housework and childcare activities (for example, moms go shopping on certain days and dads cook, and vice versa on other days). Also, if online parent-teacher meetings are organized, homeroom teachers should require equal presence of both parents (except in cases of single-parent families), i.e. that dads and moms attend alternately.
- In the event of a pandemic, it is necessary to better harmonize the cycles of collecting and publishing the Labour Force Survey data with the new circumstances, in order to get a more accurate picture of the consequences of the pandemic on the labour market conditions, including gender aspects.

Recommendations for eliminating gender inequalities in the labour market

- It is important to work continuously on eliminating gender inequalities both in the area of education and in the labour market, because these two areas are linked very closely. Special attention should be paid to encouraging young men to enrol in both secondary schools and faculties that provide the knowledge and competencies needed to perform jobs in the field of care economy (in health care, education, etc.), and girls to enter professions traditionally and predominantly performed by men, such as engineering, ICT, etc.
- It is necessary to examine why women rely less on the NES support in employment, to do a gender-specific assessment of the effectiveness of the NES support in employment and based on that to improve the support for women's employment and thereby increase women's confidence in this employment channel.
- Since the first to be affected during each social crisis are those who are the least protected and whose labour rights are the least respected, it is necessary to conduct regular monitoring of social rights of employees, taking into account the basic socio-demographic characteristics of employees (such as sex and age), but also the sector in which they work, their occupation, type of contract they have, etc. Also, in order to protect labour rights, it is necessary to increase labour inspections, both in the public and in the private and mixed sectors.
- In order to give women the opportunity to return to work as easily as possible and to devote themselves not only to the family but also to professional obligations, the state and employers should encourage the use of father's childcare leave, as the legal basis for that already exists. Since "soft" measures of awareness-raising and promoting greater use of parental leave by fathers

have not yielded good results so far, a "father quota" should be introduced, i.e. non-transferable parental leave that only fathers can use.

- Having in mind that there is still a far smaller number of women in Serbia who have a driver's license compared to men, various campaigns and incentives (discounts in driving schools, etc.) should try to motivate women to acquire this important competence and fulfil the first condition for using a car. This would also reduce the number of women depending on other drivers in the household and would be a significant step towards achieving gender equality in this aspect.
- Women's entrepreneurship is of great importance for trying to achieve gender equality in the economic sphere, and that is why it is very important to continuously monitor the development of this type of entrepreneurship and provide special incentives for women starting their own business. Bearing in mind that women's entrepreneurship is on average less resistant to the shocks of crises, special support measures should be envisaged for women entrepreneurs in times of crisis, including the state of epidemic.
- It is important to work on encouraging digital competencies of women, especially those living in rural areas, women with disabilities, Roma women, women from other marginalized groups, because these competencies are extremely important for employment in the modern society (especially in ICT, as one of the best-paid sectors), but also for access to public services which are increasingly being provided through internet portals.
- It is necessary to systematically improve the accessibility of childcare facilities, which enables more adequate support to families and especially women, who now have the primary responsibilities in child care, and thus create better opportunities for their employment or easier reconciliation of professional and family responsibilities.

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APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH SAMPLE STRUCTURE

Table 4: Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents, in %

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents		%
Region	Belgrade	25.8
	Vojvodina	26.3
	Šumadija and Western Serbia	27.6
	Southern and Eastern Serbia	20.2
Type of settlement	City	60.3
	Village	39.7
Sex	Male	46.8
	Female	53.2
Age	18-29	15.8
	30-39	29.9
	40-49	26.8
	50-59	20.5
	60+	7
Highest education attained	No school or incomplete primary school	0.1
	Primary school	1.3
	Secondary vocational school lasting 2 or 3 years (crafts)	7.3
	Secondary vocational school lasting 4 years (medicine, economy, law, graphic design, and similar)	34.9
	Gymnasium	4.8
	Higher education (college)	14.6
	Faculty and post-graduate studies (master's, PhD, specialist studies)	37.1
Household type	Single-person households	6.8
	Single-parent families	9.8
	Married couples with children	45.2
	Married couples without children	11.8
	Multigenerational family	11.1
	Multifamily households	15.3

Source: SeConS research, April 2020.